Change Marks 1991, at MIT and Around the World

By Brian Rosenberg

Another year has passed, taking with it a multitude of images, sounds, and words. And, for good reasons, things have changed in this year, both right here at MIT and around the world. Change in 1991 wasn’t a gradual thing. Before many of us could adjust to CNN, the Persian Gulf War began with the downing of American aircraft by Iraqis and the arrival of Soviet citizens standing in lines to attend and fight for the affordable airfare to the world’s longest war.

Though the U.S. economy was crumbling, news in the world at large was getting just too fast for a total of exceptions in the Middle East (as usual) and Yugoslavia, the world looked as though it might be ready to sit down and talk about peace for a while. On campus, things were not so rosy. Despite her illness, Margaret MacVicar’s death left many people wondering why they had never considered her to be one more of the “women one should be like without her.” Of that it could be without her.

Students killed themselves, and tried to kill each other. Other state cul-

tures, the record of convictions, prohibitions, and explosions is staggering. It was feared that the Committee on Discipline because a computer program flagged them as having turned in an unoriginal assignment. Reduced to only a similar to someone else’s, in some cases, the case was uncontested. In most, however, the case had evidence.

Two students were expelled for the threat of $70,000 in computer equip-ment. Two students were expelled. The third is intact to the crimes but not penalized. The three are expelled from their fraternity.

A student sets his suite on fire after an argument with a suite-mate and is sentenced to 10 years in prison. For many of you, that’s half as long as you’ve lived.

And what can blame them? The adults around them, teachers and adminis-

trators, are themselves put under a whole series of microscopes which reveal behavior that is far from exemplary. A Nobel Laureate and president of a prestigious university admits he was wrong to defend a col-

league’s work, which is almost universally believed to have falsi-

ified the findings. MIT is forced to return the money it took from the federal government to harbor his research.

The financial funny business only begins there. At MIT and a score of other high-caliber universities across the country, government investigators are looking into the work of pay-to-play scientists, champagne dinners, and yachts. These revelations have caused the MIT’s scientific community to question who science is done in question. Public confidence in the ivory towers is gone.

MIT also finds itself wrestling with the Justice Department over meet-

ings at which many of those same university officials had financial and social, under DormCon’s proposed limit on the amount of drinking that took place in dormitories. Under DormCon’s October proposal, dormitory houses would be allowed to spend a percentage of house tax it allowed dormitories to have. The percentage of house tax that could be used to purchase alcohol.

A Committee on Values has been formed to examine and deal with many of the issues and dilemmas raised by the situation. More locally, a booklet aimed at preventing harassment was distributed, and discussion about often uncomfortable topics such as safe sex and rape flourished. A shuttle service that can prevent untold crimes and keep people warm in the winter."